

Nevada Social Studies Standards Geography Glossary

Atmosphere: The envelope of gases, aerosols, and other materials that surrounds Earth and is held close by gravity. The gases are predominantly nitrogen, oxygen, argon, and carbon dioxide and include much smaller percentages of helium, methane, and hydrogen.

Biodiversity: The number and variety of different organisms in the region in which they occur.

Biosphere: The realm of Earth that includes all plant and animal life forms.

Cardinal directions: The four main points of the compass: north, east, south, west.

Compass rose: Device drawn on maps to show the directions.

Complex map: See special purpose maps.

Cultural diffusion: The spread of cultural elements from one culture to another.

Culture: Learned behavior of people, which includes their belief systems and languages, their social relationships and customs, their institutions and organizations, and their material goods — food, clothing, buildings, tools, and machines.

Degradation: The act of reducing worth or value.

Demographic: Pertaining to the study of population statistics, changes, and trends based on various measures such as fertility (adding to a population), mortality (subtracting from a population), and migration (redistribution of a population), literacy rate, per capita income, and gross domestic product.

Depletion: The gradual lessening or destruction of capital assets, especially of natural resources.

Developed countries: An area of the world that is technologically advanced, highly urbanized, and has generally evolved through both economic and demographic transitions.

Developing country: A country that is changing from uneven growth to more constant economic conditions, and that is generally characterized by low rates of urbanization, relatively high rates of infant mortality and illiteracy, and relatively low rates of life expectancy and energy use.

Distribution: The arrangement of items over a specified area (synonymous with spatial distributions).

Economics: The science that deals with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

Ecosystem (ecological system): A system formed by the interaction of all living organisms (plants, animals, humans) with each other and with the physical and chemical factors of the environment in which they live.

Fragmentation: Breaking a part away from the whole.

Geographic Information System (GIS): A geographic data base that contains information about the distribution of physical and human characteristics of places or areas. In order to test hypotheses, maps of one characteristics or combination can be produced from the database to analyze the data relationships.

Goods: Merchandise, wares available for sale or trade.

Grid: A pattern of lines on a chart or map, such as those representing latitude and longitude.

Human features: Features and patterns on Earth's surface created by humans, including dwellings, crops, roads, machines, places of worship and other cultural elements; synonymous with human characteristics and cultural landscapes.

Hydrosphere: The water realm of Earth, which includes water contained in the oceans, lakes, rivers, ground, glaciers, and water vapor in the atmosphere.

Interdependence: Two mutually dependent people relying on each other in different places or in the same place for ideas, goods, and services.

Intermediate directions: The points of the compass that fall between north and east, north and west, south and east, south and west (such as NE, NW, SE, SW).

Land use: The range of uses of Earth's surface made by humans. Uses are classified as urban, rural agricultural, forests, etc., with more specific sub-classifications useful for specific purposes (for example, low-density residential, light industrial, nursery crops).

Latitude: Location north or south of the equator measured by imaginary lines (parallels) numbered in degrees north or south.

Lithosphere: The uppermost portion of the solid Earth, including the soil, land, and geologic formations.

Longitude: Location east or west of the prime meridian measured by imaginary lines (meridians) numbered in degrees east or west.

Map projection: A mathematical formula by which the lines of a global grid and the shapes of land and water bodies are transferred from a globe to a flat surface, for example, Mercator, Robinson, conic, and polar.

Migration: The act or process of people moving from one place to another with the intent of staying at the destination permanently or for a relatively long period of time.

Multinational organization: Organizations of nations aligned around a common economic or political cause.

Natural hazard: An event in the physical environment, such as a hurricane or earthquake, that is destructive to human life and property.

Nonrenewable resource: A finite resource that cannot be replaced once it is used (for example, petroleum, minerals).

Perception: The feelings, attitudes, and images people have of different places, peoples, and environments. The images people have in their heads of where places are located are called perceptual or mental maps.

Physical feature: Aspect of place or area that derives from the physical environment.

Pivotal: Describes an essential component that determines the effect of something.

Place: Location having distinctive characteristics that give it meaning and character and distinguish it from other locations.

Political boundaries: The limit or extent within which a system exists or functions (such as governments of cities, counties, states, countries).

Population density: The number of individuals occupying an area, derived from dividing the number of people by the area they occupy.

Primary sources: First hand information about people and events such as that found in a diary, legal document or personal interview.

Pull factors: In migration theory, the social, political, economic, and environmental forces that drive people from their previous location to search for new ones.

Push factors: In migration theory, the social, political, economic and environmental attractions of new areas that draw people away from their previous location.

Region: An area with characteristics or features that give it a measure of homogeneity and make it different from surrounding areas.

Relative location: The location of a place or region in relation to other places or regions, such as northwest or downstream.

Renewable resource: A resource that can be regenerated if used carefully (for example, fish, timber).

Resource: An aspect of the physical environment that people value and use to meet a need for fuel, food, an industrial product, or something else of value.

Secondary sources: Information that is not based on direct experience.

Services: Work done for others as an occupation or business.

Settlement pattern: The spatial distribution and arrangement of human habitations, including rural and urban centers.

Spatial: Pertaining to space on Earth's surface; refers to distances, directions, areas and other aspects of space.

Spatial organization: The mode in which Earth space is structured.

Spatial pattern/organization: Pattern of space on the Earth's surface.

Spatial perspective: The point of view that emphasizes the essential issue of place — embodied in specific questions such as “Where is it?” or “Why is it there?” — as a fundamental dimension of human experience.

Special purpose/thematic/complex map: A map representing a specific spatial distribution, theme, or topic, for example, population density, cattle production, or climates of the world.

Suburban: Pertaining to the culture, manners, and customs of a residential area outlying a city.

System: A collection of entities that are linked and interrelated, such as the hydrologic cycle, cities, and transportation modes.

Topographic: Detailed map illustrating selected physical and human features of a place.

Trans-regional alliances: Political and economic alliances between states that transcend traditional cultural regions for example, Organization of African Unity, OPEC, United Nations, Colorado River Basin Authority, Tahoe Regional Planning Commission.

Unification: The act of combining into one.

Urban: Related to a city or densely populated area.